

October 20, 2009 - Murtha Reviews Health Debate

The Herald Standard

www.heraldstandard.com

Murtha reviews health debate

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October 20, 2009

U.S. Rep. John Murtha said Monday that legislators in Washington, D.C., are working to solve a number of issues regarding healthcare in the United States.

During a telephone town hall meeting for 40,000 residents living in Fayette, Greene and Washington counties, Murtha answered questions and discussed a variety of topics ranging from the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the future of the coal and steel industries. The majority of questions dealt with healthcare and insurance coverage.

Murtha, D-Johnstown, said more than 60,000 people are without health insurance in the 12th Congressional District.

"We're struggling in Washington with a number of issues and healthcare is one of them," Murtha said.

According to Murtha, life expectancy and quality of life in the U.S. are not up to par with other modernized Western countries despite the fact that the U.S. spends more money on healthcare.

Murtha said he and his fellow legislators are working to figure out ways to provide health insurance for everyone without increasing costs.

Issues surrounding healthcare are complicated and will take time to resolve, he said.

"Healthcare is an issue that affects every single person in this country," Murtha said. "We're working to make sure we pass a uniquely American plan. We're not going to pass a plan like Canada or Great Britain or anyone else."

Murtha said it's ridiculous that the country's health care costs are double any other country's costs.

"Yet the quality of healthcare is not as good as we'd like," he said, promising that legislators are steadfastly working toward finding a solution that will provide coverage for the uninsured without adversely affecting anyone.

"We're going to work it out. It's a slow process and people are frustrated, but we have to make sure we get it right," he said.

Murtha said he is in favor of tort reform but doubts it will be included in any proposed legislation.

"I've supported medical malpractice tort reform for years. If it could be part of the package I'd be delighted, but we've got a lot

of lawyers in Washington and I'm not optimistic it will happen even though I'm for it," he said, adding that tort reform would do more for the country than any other sort of reform could accomplish.

In regards to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Murtha said legislators are trying to come up with a plan that will safely bring troops home from Iraq while determining what needs to be done in Afghanistan.

Murtha said Afghanistan is a challenge because there are no adequate roads or railways to transport soldiers and supplies.

"Everything we have to send in is by air," he said, noting that flying everything in will increase costs. "We've already spent almost a trillion dollars on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

As for the future of the coal and steel industries, Murtha assured residents that both industries will be around for a long, long time.

However, Murtha said he continues to remain in favor of legislation that regulates pollutants both industries release into the environment. Murtha said he will continue to support the coal and steel industries but that he will also support clean energy.